

IN THE CLAIMS

*The status of the claims as presently amended is as follows:*

1-21. (Cancelled)

22. (Previously Presented) An image printing system according to claim 25, wherein the assigning element preferentially assigns the image data to be printed to the printing device that has printed out the least number of image data among the printing devices.

23. (Previously Presented) An image printing system according to claim 25, wherein the assigning element assigns the same image data to the same printing device.

24. (Previously Presented) An image printing system according to claim 25, wherein the assigning element assigns a smaller percentage of image data to a certain printing device than to other printing devices.

25. (Currently Amended) An image printing system having a plurality of image output apparatuses connected and positioned next to each other, each apparatus having an input element for inputting image data, an instruction element for instructing by an operator to print out, a printing element for printing out image data using a printing device, ~~and~~ a removal opening corresponding to the printing device, and a printed item conveying device for conveying printed items between the image output apparatuses and conveying the printed items to the removal opening, comprising:

an assigning element for assigning the image data instructed by the operator to the printing device of at least one of the other image output apparatuses, in addition to performing the printout process itself; and

~~a printed item conveying device for conveying printed items to the removal opening of the image output apparatus instructed by the operator.~~

a conveying element for conveying the printed items to the removal opening of the apparatus having requested the printing using the printed item conveying device if the image output apparatus itself is not the apparatus having requested the printing.

26. (Previously Presented) An image printing system according to claim 25, further comprising a removal-opening open close element for opening an open and close flap of the removal opening of the image output apparatus instructed by the operator and closing those of all other removal openings.

27. (Currently Amended) An image output method performed by an image printing system having a plurality of image output apparatuses connected and positioned next to each other, each apparatus having an input element for inputting image data, an instruction element for instructing by an operator to print out, a printing element for printing out image data using a printing device, ~~and a removal opening corresponding to the printing device, and a printed item conveying device for conveying printed items between the image output apparatuses and conveying the printed items to the removal opening~~, comprising:

assigning the image data instructed by the operator to ~~the printing devices of at least one of the other~~ image output apparatuses, in addition to performing the printout process itself; and

conveying printed items to the removal opening of the ~~image output apparatus instructed by the operator~~ having requested the printing using the printed item conveying device if the image output apparatus itself is not the apparatus having requested the printing.

28-42. (Cancelled)

43. (Currently Amended) A computer readable recording medium on which is recorded a computer program which causes a computer to function as an image printing system, having a plurality of image output apparatuses connected and positioned next to each other, each apparatus having an input element for inputting image data, an instruction element for instructing by an operator to print out, a printing element for printing out image data using a printing device, ~~and removal opening corresponding to the printing device, and a printed item conveying device for conveying printed items between the image output apparatuses and conveying the printed items to the removal opening~~, wherein the image printing system comprises:

an assigning element for assigning the image data instructed by the operator to ~~the printing device of at least one of the other~~ image output apparatuses, in addition to performing the printout process itself; and

a printed item conveying device for conveying printed items to the removal opening of the image output apparatus instructed by the operator.

a conveying element for conveying the printed items to the removal opening of the apparatus having requested the printing using the printed item conveying device if the image output apparatus itself is not the apparatus having requested the printing.